

# Clearing & Grading Permit Requirements

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Before you start any project that includes clearing and grading, tree removal or tree cutting, installation of rockeries or landscape walls, or work in a Protected Area, you should check to see if you need a permit for your project. Many people are surprised to learn that the city requires a permit for such work. The purpose of the permit is to help protect water and earth resources, fish and wildlife habitat, and public health and safety from potential adverse impacts associated with clearing and grading activities.

## Clearing & Grading

If your project involves removal or destruction of over 1,000 square feet of vegetation and/or movement of more than 50 cubic yards of earth material, a clearing & grading permit is required. Removal or destruction of vegetation means clearing the ground so that the underlying soil is exposed, or killing vegetation in place, as with chemicals. Mowing grass and pruning plants are not considered clearing. Earth materials include soil, sand, gravel, rock asphalt, and concrete.

## Removing Trees

Tree Removal that results in over 1,000 square feet of disturbance of the ground requires a clearing & grading permit. Disturbance of the ground results from any action that displaces or destroys vegetation resulting in increased exposure of the underlying soils. This can include exposure of the existing ground due to removal of tree canopy where no other vegetation is growing under the tree. Disturbance can also result from the physical process of tree removal, where foot and vehicle traffic, construction of access roads, felling of trees, dragging of felled trees, and excavation of stumps disturb the ground. For most single-family lots with a house, disturbance from tree removal would be minimal and can be estimated

at 50 square feet of disturbance for each living evergreen or deciduous tree, eight inches or greater in diameter measured four feet above existing grade. For larger and/or less developed areas, estimates of disturbance must be made on the anticipated amount of disturbance due to equipment access, tree felling, and dragging or skidding of trees. See Handout L-8, Tree Removal on Single-Family Lots.

On lots zoned R-1 in the Bridle Trails Subarea, a clearing and grading permit is required for removal of any significant tree. See Handout L-27a for information on tree preservation and permit requirements in the Bridle Trails R-1 Zone.

## Rockeries and Landscape Walls

Construction of rockeries or landscape walls composed of small pre-cast blocks requires a permit if they are over 48 inches in height (measured from the bottom of the base rock or block to the top of the wall). These walls are also considered structures if they are over 30 inches in height, at which point they cannot be constructed in any required structure setback. A professional engineer must design any wall that is over 4 feet in height.

## Protected Areas

Clearing or grading of any type is generally not permitted in Protected Areas. Protected Areas include steep slopes, streams, and wetlands and all of their associated setbacks. Remember that even private properties can contain Protected Areas.

## For More Information

For assistance in determining whether your project requires a clearing & grading permit, call 425-452-2019 or e-mail [ClearandGradeReview@ci.bellevue.wa.us](mailto:ClearandGradeReview@ci.bellevue.wa.us).